

Interview Transcript

Interview Date: 11/15/2017

Interviewee: Sister Leone Drexler

Interviewer: Shannon Green, Director, CSJ Institute, Mount Saint Mary's University; Sean Gary, Kelby Thwaits, Instructor, Film and Television, Mount Saint Mary's University.

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Transcribed By: Nancy Steinmann

[00:00:00.00] [Director's comments]

[00:02:02.20] SHANNON GREEN: Today is November 15, 2017. We are at Carondelet Center, Mount Saint Mary's University, CSJ Oral History Project, Shannon Green interviewing Sister Leone Drexler.

[00:02:16.19] SHANNON GREEN: So let's get started. Would you please state your full name and your age?

[00:02:23.10] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: [laughs]. My full name is Sister Leone Drexler. I'm 79 years old. I can hardly wait to get to the--eighty. Doesn't it sound silly? But all--most of the people in my group are 70 already--I mean, 70--80 already, and I am just dragging a little bit behind. [laughs].

[00:02:48.14] SHANNON GREEN: Sister Leone, would you share your baptismal name with us?

[00:02:52.01] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: Leone.

[00:02:53.01] SHANNON GREEN: Really?

[00:02:54.06] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: Really.

[00:02:55.12] SHANNON GREEN: I thought that was your name in religion.

[00:02:55.28] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: It is. It was Sister Ilene Leo [Drexler] for a while--my mom and dad's names. But then we had the opportunity to change back to our baptismal names if we wanted. And I asked my mother and father, and they said, "That was the name we gave you--we would be delighted if you go back." So I thought they would feel bad not having their names, but they were happy my having the name they gave me.

[00:03:29.05] SHANNON GREEN: Would you share a little bit about your family and your childhood--where you grew up?

[00:03:34.12] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: I was born in San Francisco. And I'm the oldest child in a family of four children. My dad was a machinist, my mom was a stay-at-home mother in those days. And I have one brother who's a year and a half younger than I am--his name's John. And he also was a machinist. And then I have another brother who's seven years younger than I--Jim. And Jimmy is--was also a machinist, so it was--I guess the family business. And then my sister, who's ten and a half years younger than I am--and that half is really important, because when I was--well even now, when I hit eighty, she'll only be 69--will she be sixty--yes. She'll be 69. She'll be--I don't know how old she'll be--she'll be 68 for a while, and it won't--she won't get up to me. We'll never have--we'll never be in the same decade. That's why it was important.

[00:04:55.05] SHANNON GREEN: What kinds of things was your family involved in? Were you part of a parish community?

[00:05:03.28] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: Yes, we grew up in St. Emydius parish in San Francisco. It's the--Ingleside--I get it mixed up with Los Angeles, Inglewood--Ingleside part of the city which is south southern part of the city, not too close to Golden Gate Park, but close enough that we went there sometimes to play. My dad worked most of the time, and my mom loved to go on vacation. So we would go to--oh, a place like--well we'd go to the woods--to the forest to camp in the summertime. And dad would take us up, set up the camping equipment, the tent and everything else, spend the weekend and then go back to work. So we did see him on weekends and we did see him during the week, but he was not a camper. He liked working better. [smiles].

[00:06:09.07] SHANNON GREEN: Were you a very religious family?

[00:06:12.11] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: The family, no. I mean, we went to Catholic school, and my mom and dad were both Catholics, but for my mother the Catholic school was really important to her. For my dad he went to public school, and he couldn't understand why my mother wanted us in Catholic school. So that was always something that they disagreed on--they didn't fight, but they disagreed on how we were being educated, so. We did get involved in a lot of the things of the Church. My dad, for not being a religious man, would jump at the request of some of the Sisters. The first grade Sister, Sister Francis [??] would say, "Can your dad come and finish off these desks--polish them and get them set up for school?" And so my dad would be there within ten minutes. He'd jump up and be there and do what she asked for, so that was always a strange thing. He rarely went to church, but he did come when we had First Communion or Confirmation or whatever--he would always be there. Are my hands showing? Because I'm real--I'm not nervous, but I do that--I rub my hands together all the time.

[00:07:35.21] [Director's comments].

[00:07:49.18] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: And so anyway he did support us in the things we wanted to do. In fact, when it came time for me to enter, my mother, who had talked to us all her life about wanting to be a Sister herself, was really upset and disappointed that that's what I was choosing. And my dad said to me, "You know, it's not what I would choose for you, but if it's what you want, then that's what I would, you know, support you in that." So, I don't know. It was a crazy mixture of whatever. [laughs].

[00:08:24.13] SHANNON GREEN: Where did you first meet the Sisters of St. Joseph?

[00:08:27.21] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: I first met the Sisters of St. Joseph when--I don't know--when I was a baby I guess, because my aunt--my mom and dad raised my aunt--I forgot to say that. And she was nine years older than I. And I--we would go to school to get her--pick her up--and so I met the Sisters there. It was just a normal thing to do--to be there. And then I started kindergarten with them--went all the--the only grade I did not have Sisters of St. Joseph was the first grade when I was going to a school in downtown San Francisco, and it was the Holy Name Sisters. I never really got to know them.

[00:09:17.03] SHANNON GREEN: When do you think you started thinking about becoming a Sister yourself?

[00:09:21.10] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: When I was in the second grade, and Sister Anne Bernadette [Kehoe??], who lives here now--I don't know if you have filmed her yet, but she's the "cookie

Sister"--was my second grade teacher. And at the end of the second grade, she left us and went to Hawaii. So at that time I said to my mother, "When I grow up I'm going to be a Sister and I'm going to go to Hawaii." So, you know, it was just a definite thing, that's what was going to happen. And then I forgot about it--I didn't think about it anymore, until I was in high school. And by that time I had gone through eight years of elementary school with our Sisters--nine years. And then high school I went to Star of the Sea High School, and really got to know our Sisters pretty well there, and knew that's what I wanted. So when the time came to make decisions about what we were going to do--just in case there was a problem--because I was a year younger than most of the kids in my class--I also applied to different colleges--to Lone Mountain in San Francisco, which no longer exists, I don't think, as a women's college, and San Francisco State College. You notice I wasn't going very far from home with either one of those. And that's what my mother would have really liked--if I stayed at home and done that. But I did get accepted, and everyone was happy. After my brother--oh, we went down by train, and my brother--my youngest brother--held my leg when I was trying to get out of the train. He said, "Please don't go! Please don't go! Mommy's going to cry! Please don't go!" [laughs]. And so, that was one of hardest things, was hearing him and responding to that. "I've got to go!"

[00:11:36.28] SHANNON GREEN: Can you say what it was about being a Sister, or the Sisters of St. Joseph in particular, that you wanted for yourself--that you wanted to be a part of?

[00:11:47.13] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: Well, seeing the Sisters my whole life, and knowing the kinds of things that they did, and how happy they were together most of the time--that was something I wanted for myself. Also the fact that the two things--two major things that they were involved in--that we were involved in--was teaching and nursing. And so, teaching--I really wanted to be a teacher. On the other hand I really wanted to be a doctor. So that one I put aside, because I thought that could never be possible. You know, even in this day and age. And it was a very difficult kind of thing. But teaching was really the thing I loved.

[00:12:38.15] SHANNON GREEN: So you knew even then that you--that teaching would probably be part of your ministry?

[00:12:43.29] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: Yeah.

[00:12:47.27] SHANNON GREEN: And everybody says the Sisters seemed relatively happy together, that they were friendly to each other.

[00:12:56.12] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: Right, and to us. You know, they invited us into different kinds of things. I was--not just myself but--we were not strangers in the convent. They would invite us in, especially into the kitchen. The--I can't even remember the names of the people now, but the--whoever the cook was, would call us in, invite us in, and give us cookies and milk and have us run errands and--you know, it was all the good things that you could do.

[00:13:30.14] SHANNON GREEN: I was going to ask if you remember any of the names of the Sisters from those times.

[00:13:34.27] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: The ones who taught me, I do.

[00:13:36.22] SHANNON GREEN: Would you mention a few of those?

[00:13:39.00] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: Sure. In kindergarten I had Sister Regina McLaughlin, who is here. And then of course I went to--where did I go--St. Joseph's downtown, and the Holy Name

Sisters. I don't remember who I had. So second grade was Sister Anne Bernadette [Kehoe??]. Third grade--I can see her face--I'm not getting a name. Fourth grade, Sister Florentine [?]-fourth grade, yeah. Fifth grade, Sister--another face--fifth and sixth. Seventh grade was--let's see, I'm forgetting some now--seventh grade was Sister Adele Marie [Morgan?? (-2014)], who has gone to heaven in the last couple of years. Eighth grade was Sister [Mary] Daniel Musgrave [(-1968)], who was one of the Sisters who had transferred from the Idaho Sisters. And so, yeah. Isn't that silly? Had a "Joseph" in it. Oh well. It'll come to me. But those were the ones I remember the most from grade school. High school?

[00:15:04.18] SHANNON GREEN: How about the--maybe any Sisters that maybe encouraged your vocation while you were in high school?

[00:15:10.11] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: Oh high school, Sister Helen Clare [Fenton (1917-2010)] and Sister Patricia Clare [Mullin (1908-2002)]; Sister St. James [?] in particular, because she had been my auntie's teacher in high school and I knew her from the time I was like, in second grade. And--but those are the ones who would have--encouraged me--yeah--encouraged several of us, I would guess.

[00:15:44.07] SHANNON GREEN: There were probably several who entered from--

[00:15:47.22] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: Um-hm. There were fourteen of us I think from my class who entered. And there are--well, we had our last Jubilee--our fiftieth Jubilee--there were still ten of us left. So--and a couple have died since then, so.

[00:16:04.27] SHANNON GREEN: So then you come to Los Angeles?

[00:16:09.08] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: Came to Los Angeles, and to this house. We were the first ones to enter here. They brought us into the parlors here--there were no chairs. So they brought the chairs from the dining room, and set them up so that we could talk to one another, and talk to the Sisters who were meeting us. And some of the novices who were here got to come out and greet us. And then when we had all--just about all arrived, and been greeted and whatever, they took us to our dorms, which also did not have chairs yet--[laughs]--but we had beds, and we did--I think we did have the drapes around the room--the beds too. There were seven of us in a dorm--four on one side, three on the other. And then between every two dorms there was a bathroom. And it had a couple of showers and a couple of tubs and a couple of johnny's--so we were well taken care of. We didn't have to go far down the hall. And we had a sink in our own little alcove so you could do whatever you need to do there. And the next thing they did was take us down to the chapel, which is not the chapel--it's one of the classrooms. But because there were so many of us--there were 53 of us, I think, who entered in our group, and then not quite as many, but a similar number the year before us, and then the year--so there were over a hundred novices and fifty-something of us. And so we were in the classrooms--we were in the front. There as a stage there--stage was where the altar was. And the novices--the rest of them were all back of us. So we went to the chapel there. And then we went upstairs to our dorms and we changed our clothes. And at that time, we wore a pleated skirt--a black pleated skirt and a white--you know, a black blouse--I think it was a black blouse with white cuffs, and a cape. And so yeah, we got changed and next time we came downstairs it was for dinner. So they took the--put all the chairs back in the dining room, so there were chairs and tables for us. But we had to wait--all through our postulate, we watched the building of the chapel here, from the ground--literally from the ground up. And when we made--when we received the habit we were at the Mount. When we made our final vows--we made our first vows we were up there--when we made our final vows we were here. I'm almost sure that's the way it worked. You know what happens? As you get a little bit older

you start forgetting little facts. [laughs].

[00:19:42.29] SHANNON GREEN: It happens for some of us before then. [laughs]. Were those happy days?

[00:19:49.16] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: Oh yes.

[00:19:50.13] SHANNON GREEN: Tell--what did you like about--

[00:19:52.06] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: I did not get homesick, for some reason. Some people did. But the majority of us were--they were happy days. We were going to college--we were in college classes. Some of the teachers came down and taught us down here. They taught us History of the Congregation, and they taught some of our Theology classes down here. I was taking French, so we had French classes down here, because there were just a few of us who were doing that. And one of the novices actually taught us our first French class here. That was an amazing thing. I'd studied French in high school, and our teacher, Sister St. James [??] had come from--oh goodness--what's the French--the island--Canada--in Canada?

[00:20:49.19] SHANNON GREEN: Newfoundland?

[00:20:50.01] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: Newfoundland--

[00:20:51.18] SHANNON GREEN: --or--Nova Scotia?

[00:20:56.18] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: Anyway, she spoke with that accent. And then I got to the Mount, and we had Sister Mary [Vaughn] Williams--didn't get to the Mount, we were up here--and Mary Williams was our teacher and she was an American who had studied in Paris, and she wrote our last books. So you know who she is. Then I had Sister Eloise Therese [Mescall (1919-2001)], who was French and Spanish--different accent--it's the accents now. And then I had--oh God--Dr.--what's his name--he was from--lost it--but anyway, another accent. And then I tried to speak to people and when I would say something they would not quite understand what I was saying. So when they'd say, "Do you speak French?" I would say, "à peu" [a little] and they'd laugh. And when I went to France, I wrote--I could write fine. I wrote a letter, because we were going to little places to stay rather than big hotels--"pensions" [boarding houses] I guess. And--but when I got there and tried to speak French it was a little bit different, because they were laughing. And I couldn't understand why people were laughing at me, but that was it. And then when I went to teach at St. Mary's we had Madame [Nataf?], who was Jewish French, and another accent. And oh my goodness--[laughs]. So I can read and I can write a little bit, but I refrain from speaking too much.

[00:22:58.22] SHANNON GREEN: [laughs]. What was your degree in at the Mount?

[00:23:00.25] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: It was--my degree was--it was--Mathematics. And we had started what they called a "group major", which was for the teachers--for those of us who were going into school. And they--it was--English, Social Studies, that kind of thing. It was in the--not--maybe some of the sciences and Math, but not as it got further along. I really wanted to go into Chemistry. I really wanted that. But there were no--there was no room. The classes were limited to the space, and the space was not very big in those days. So I cried, because two of the people in my reception got to go to Chemistry and I didn't. But one of them had started before, and the other one for some reason got to go too. So I cried, and I cried. And Sister Francis [??], who was doing the placement in different departments, wanted to know why I was crying--why--what's

happening with you? And I said, "Well I really wanted to go into Chemistry". I've learned that crying gets you a lot of things, you know? If you do it to the right people--[laughs]--at the right time. And so anyway, she says, "Well, would you be interested in Math?" And I said, "Yes". So I was in the Math department from then on. I did take a lot of the things that the group major people took, but I also took the Math. And then when we made final vows and were ready to leave here, I stayed for an extra year as--in the juniorate, and I was in the Math department at that time. So--that's when I graduated--actually in--I graduated high school in '55 and I graduated from the Mount in '59. So I made it just right. But it was because of that extra year that I spent studying.

[00:25:17.08] SHANNON GREEN: Were you excited to get out into the classroom?

[00:25:21.02] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: Yes, and a little bit scared, because some people had done practice teaching, and then gone out, and I had done my year--extra year of studying Math, and then I was assigned to the second grade. Okay, now--here I am, in front of these second graders, and my worst nightmare--and I really had this nightmare--was that they would climb out the window. But we were on the second floor, so--[laughs]--it was really a nightmare. It never happened--I had perfect control of them. [laughs]. And they never had any problems like that. Let's see--yeah, I loved it. I loved the little ones. And even when I was at the end of my teaching career, I was--I got a grant from St. Paul [Minnesota]--our province in St. Paul had sold, I guess, the hospital, and they were using their money in giving grants to people who were teaching in schools where some of their Sisters were teaching. Well just as a matter of that happening, one of the Sisters from St. Paul was my assistant in the Counseling Center. And so I had the masters from Notre Dame--I went to Notre Dame--I got a grant there, and I had my masters in Mathematics from Notre Dame University in South Bend, Indiana. And I got my degree from Loyola Marymount in Counseling and Guidance, and then I went on to school psychology--so from Loyola Marymount. So, I was doing both things--I was doing counseling and Math at St.--when I went to St. Mary's. Oh boy--let me do a little chronological thing, which won't take long, because I spent long times in places.

[00:27:38.01] SHANNON GREEN: Yes, you did--which is a little different from some of your other Sisters.

[00:27:40.28] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: Right. I spent four years at St. Anselm's in the second grade, and I loved them and I hated leaving them. The families there were very wonderful and it was just a good place to be. Then I went to--from there I went to Bishop Conaty [High School], and I taught just one year at Bishop Conaty, and lived at [Infant of] Prague [convent], which today is called "Stimson House" [in Los Angeles, California]. And that was a year that I'll never forget, because wonderful people to live with. It was also the year that President Kennedy [U. S. President John F. Kennedy (1917-1963)] was assassinated. And yes, I do know exactly where I was when we got the word--I was in--I was actually in the chapel on my way to lunch when they made the announcement over the PA. So, that was a rough time. That--I had said to people that I thought it was really important, if you are going to make an impact on a school or a place where you ministered, that it be important to stay there for a certain amount of time, and I thought three years sounded like a good time. So my fourth--because the first year you're just learning and so on. By the third year, you've gotten to know people and know what you're doing and you can--you've got control of yourself. Well, that was only the one year, so my whole theory didn't work. But I still have some contacts from St. Mary's that are good--not St. Mary's--Conaty that are good ones. Went from Conaty to San Diego to Cathedral High School. I had never thought that I would ever get to San Diego. My mom and dad, in fact, were married in San Diego, at the Cathedral, where I was missioned. And so it was just a--like something I thought would never happen. And I loved every place I ever taught. And almost every school I taught at was connected--high school

and grade school were connected. The Conaty one did not, but that was just that one year. And so I never really left the delight of being with younger people. I loved the high school girls--I loved them immensely. But the joy of my life, I guess, was with the little people. Then I went--three years there--then I went to Star of the Sea [San Francisco, California], and I started off--my usual thing, with Mathematics--and everything else, because it was a small school and so I taught everything else too. Taught Biology, and I taught Religion, and I taught--I don't know--whatever they wanted to throw my way. And after a couple of years I was asked to be Principal of the school. And I thought, "My gosh, you know, I've had no training in this." And my whole--another whole thing that I have about--whatever you do, for me, is that I need to have training. I need to be educated. Do I need to have a degree necessarily? No. So I went to USF [University of San Francisco] and got--worked toward a secondary credential. So I took classes there I needed. And that was, you know--that was a good time. Again, we had a great school next door and we used to go visit. That was when--one of the Sisters that we had teased in high school had taught the second grade over there, and so that was one of the places--the other was the kindergarten, that we used to go--I used to go and visit in my free time. I can't believe this. So for nine years I was there. It was wonderful, because my parents were there in the city, and I got to see them. And my nieces and nephews all come in different groups. Well this is the group that's in their forties and fifties now--they were small--they were babies at that time. So I got to see them and watch them grow, which was really nice. And after nine years, and finishing the principalship, which I did to the best of my ability--but I know that it really wasn't the--my thing. And I did teach each year that I was in the--I was in administration. But then, I had done some counseling while I was there too. In fact, I had started a little counseling corner. And got a grant to do that too, but it was from the City of San Francisco, and so we had counselors come in who could work with the girls--who could work with the students, which was really good--in all kinds of things. One of them dealt with suicide and death and dying kinds of things. The other one--another one dealt with college counseling. So, anyway, I helped get that whole thing started. And then I went down to--came down here to St. Mary's Academy [Los Angeles, California]--'67 to '76 in San Francisco, '76 to '85 at St. Mary's, and elementary school, St. John Chrysostom right next door. So I thought, okay, I'm doing this thing that I've been doing always. And I started with the Math. And when they asked me to do counseling, I said, "I would love it, but I need to go and get some education." I mean, I may have a natural knack for it but I really need to know that I'm doing the right thing. So I went to Loyola Marymount and got my degree, as I say, in Counseling and Guidance. And then--there--in School Psychology program. That was a little bit harder, because I went to school at night time, and on Saturdays, so I was doing a little bit more than--I had done before that. But I loved it. I loved St. Mary's. And then, let's see--in--

[00:34:46.11] SHANNON GREEN: Can I stop you there for a moment?

[00:34:48.02] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: Yes, you may.

[00:34:48.16] SHANNON GREEN: So before we go--you're going to start to transition into your time in Hawaii--would you--can we go back? So now we've got a picture of your teaching ministry. While this is unfolding in your life, we've gone through Vatican II [Second Vatican Council (1962-1965)], and also I'm thinking you lived in San Francisco in the seventies.

[00:35:07.13] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: That's right.

[00:35:08.20] SHANNON GREEN: So--

[00:35:09.01] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: Guess what summer I moved up there?

[00:35:11.16] SHANNON GREEN: Summer of Love [1967]?

[00:35:13.23] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: The Summer of Love--'67. And our school was close to the Panhandle [Park]. Golden Gate Park was right there. Want me to tell you things about that?

[00:35:25.01] SHANNON GREEN: Yeah, a little bit--at least as you're--from your perspective as a religious, what was it like to be in that--

[00:35:29.04] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: Okay. In the '70s, in the '60s--oh dear. We had a lot of students who were swept up into the whole "hippie" thing. And there were some students who would come to school every day, in their uniforms--after school they would put their uniforms in their lockers and put on whatever they were wearing to the Panhandle, and go there and spend the afternoon--eventually spend the nights. Their parents were still paying for their education, but this thing was happening. Some of them got into the drug scene, some of them did not. And so, my part in that--I had to go up and--I had to--I felt that I had to--it was not a real "have to"--I felt that I had to go and get these kids. So several times I went up and brought them back home--brought them back to their parents. And some of them wound up in the psych ward at St. Mary's Hospital, and--it was just really hard times--they were hard times, working with students--with young people. From my perspective, the whole thing was just far enough away from us that we weren't really swept up in this thing ourselves. And the--there were a lot of people in the neighborhood who were, because we were right there. And so, they did send their children to Star of the Sea to Catholic school. And the kids were great--the kids were great. And actually, they really did have their own--act out of their own minds, not out of their parents' as they grew older, so parents let them, which was a good thing. They did not impose their own beliefs on them in that way--in the hippie way. One of my nephews--we went through Golden Gate Park one day, and there were several hippies there. And he was about three. So we said, "Gregory, look at the hippies over there." He said, "Oh boy!" A little bit later, we saw some rabbits. He says, "Look at the hippies!" And so he was--totally different thing for him. [all laugh]. That was an aside. Gregory would have made you laugh all the time. But that was my perspective and my fear, that too many of them would get caught up in what was going on--too many of the students. But at the same time--the other thing that was happening was the beginnings of "The Awakening", I guess--of what--the gay revolution if you will. And so that might have been a bigger one that we were seeing--that I was seeing. And it was--many students, again, were trying things out, because this was--everything was new to them. So in this sense they ran down to Castro Street and to the Mission, where they were finding, you know, friends and solace and everything, and that kind of--in that way of life. So, I guess I grew up and nobody ever taught me this, because in my family there was a lot of prejudice that went on that I recognized. But I was never--I never got into that kind of thing--to the prejudice kind of thing. So I was very accepting of anybody who came to me with, you know, "What should I do? How should I do it?" And accepting in a sense that I did not put any blame or sense on them--or any--"sense" was not the word--or whatever on them--I did not put any negative--negativity on them. What I did--but I accepted them. And that was a good thing. And I realized it was a good thing as we went on, because they could tell others that, you know, there is somebody you can talk to. And the main thing that any counselor tells a client is that, "I will not share any of your information unless I feel that you are going to be injured or hurt or you're going to hurt someone else". And following that, along the way there were times when I did have to betray--not betray them, because they knew what the whole thing was--but go beyond just what they were saying to me. It was okay. It was okay.

[00:41:27.26] SHANNON GREEN: So it's a tumultuous time in society, and San Francisco in particular?

[00:41:32.06] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: And you're trying to teach--[laughs].

[00:41:33.04] SHANNON GREEN: --and you're trying to teach. And it's a tumultuous time, in a way, in the Church, and religious life.

[00:41:38.04] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: Yes.

[00:41:38.21] SHANNON GREEN: How did those changes impact you?

[00:41:41.06] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: --impact me? Oh, the first year I was there--the first Christmas--we changed from the habit. [laughs]. So that was a biggie. Now, we changed from the habit. So where do you get other clothes? Where do you--how can you afford to get other clothes? Well, at Christmas we changed--when I left San Diego, they gave me material to make a new habit, which I never did. I brought it with me. So I made a suit. My mother made the suit for me. And it was beautiful, because it was this beautiful black serge and all I had to do was buy blouses for it, and get a--well, we had another Sister living with us who gave enough money for each of the Sisters to have a--in the house--to have a hundred dollars to change, to get whatever they needed. Now, we know--we all know that a hundred dollars is nothing, but it is something. Okay? So we went out--you could get shoes--did not get the expensive shoes--got the inexpensive shoes. I found out that I was allergic to anything that wasn't leather. Got coats, sweaters--just because even on warm days you had to be covered in San Francisco. But those were the kinds of things that were happening. Friends were leaving the community because they were seeing things differently. We were all seeing things differently, but some of us could accept what was happening and build it into our lives as we were. Some others had a difficult time, and so it was easier for them to leave community. For some of those people, even, it was very difficult to make that kind of decision, because they have come full circle, some of them, and are very close to our community now.

[00:43:58.26] SHANNON GREEN: Was there anything about the changes in terms of--whether it's the dress, or community life, or governance, that you were excited about, or that you thought--

[00:44:10.16] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: I--[laughs]--at first did not want to change from the habit, because I thought that the people who were arguing against that were arguing from--not from realistic viewpoint but were arguing over it because--this is the way it has been, this is the way I want it to stay, kind of thing. And not--right now I can't even think what the arguments were. But I decided I was going to stay in the habit just because I didn't want to be choosing religious life because of what I wore. Or I did not want to be a Sisters of St. Joseph if the biggest thing we had to argue about was clothes. And then, in talking to friends and--as we along I was right with them at the time. So--but before that, up to that time, I had a struggle myself. So I was not excited until we started, and then I was excited, because, you know, "What can we do? How can we change these things?" We--the first day we came back to school, the kids--they're so funny--but they said, "You do have a figure!" [laughs]. I got that one, but--it was funny. Or, "You do have hair!", even though we were wearing a veil, it was a little different.

[00:45:46.25] SHANNON GREEN: What about things like the liturgy or--that just--

[00:45:53.07] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: Okay. Thank you. I was excited about liturgy--about facing the people and speaking English. And the reason was that--no maybe not in that time--that wasn't the reason--skip that. I was really excited about that, because it was hard for me to sometimes fall in line with the Latin, and make sense of it. And so when we started everything in English, then it was much easier to follow and to make it part of my life. And--but I think I needed

to go through the earlier experience of the Latin too. Believe it or not I have two years of high school Latin. Besides the Church--the Mass--Latin. Oh dear. "Puella es parva"--that was the thing we learned the first day--"The girl is small"--"Puella es parva". [all laugh].

[00:47:07.01] SHANNON GREEN: So, that was quite a time.

[00:47:12.21] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: Oh, receiving Communion in the hand--which some people still have a hard time with. Lay people being--lay ministers in all areas, not just reading, but also for being eucharistic ministers. My mother would not go to Communion from anyone but the priest--so--for a long time. So, that was hard for me when we would go to church together--"You go in that line, I'm going in this line". Anyway--

[00:47:57.03] SHANNON GREEN: Was there anything else about that period that you want to share before we--?

[00:48:01.10] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: I can't think of anything.

[00:48:02.28] SHANNON GREEN: So, looks like you went on a sabbatical, and then--

[00:48:07.11] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: No, I never went on a sabbatical.

[00:48:09.21] SHANNON GREEN: Oh, it says "San Francisco sabbatical"--no? I have--

[00:48:13.09] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: Oh! During the time that I was in--

[00:48:15.21] SHANNON GREEN: Oh, I'm sorry, it's after you already went--

[00:48:19.13] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: After I was in Hawaii for a few years and then my mother got sick, and so that's why I had the--it was like a sabbatical.

[00:48:28.19] SHANNON GREEN: I skipped ahead. I missed a line.

[00:48:29.21] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: That's okay.

[00:48:31.22] SHANNON GREEN: So, your second grade teacher said--you know, went to Hawaii, and you decided that you were going to Hawaii. How did Hawaii come back into your mind or heart, or how did that happen?

[00:48:43.23] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: My mother and Sister Anne Eugene's [??] mother wanted to go to Hawaii, and they wanted to take us on a cruise around the islands. And Sister Anne Eugene's cousin and aunt also wanted to go. So that summer--it was the summer after my dad died. So my mother needed something to keep her occupied. And she--so we went on the cruise, and it was wonderful--it was just wonderful. We stayed for a while in Oahu--it's on Oahu, in Honolulu, and also in--with Jo--down in wherever it was--St. Anthony--Kailua--St. Anthony's in Kailua. We stayed a few days there with her. And then when we went to Maui, we stayed awhile--this was before the mothers came--we went over a little early. And we stayed with Sister Roselani [Enomoto], and Sister Frances [Margaret] Darling. And we--you know, we helped in the school--I did anyway--I think she did. And then we went back to Honolulu, met our mothers and got on the ship and had our tour, and saw everybody again. But I fell in love with Maui at that time. Oahu was okay, but it's--it was a little too busy. And I was becoming a quiet person at that time. I was sort of laying back. And Maui seemed more like that kind of place. So, I asked about going. But I had

made--I know what happened--I had made a commitment to the Principal at St. Mary's--Sister Dennis Mary [McFadden] I think--and I made a commitment for the next year. Three days later I get a phone call from Hawaii asking me to come to Hawaii--the Sisters on Maui. And I said, "I can't--I cannot break a--I'm sorry, I can't break this commitment that I made". If it had been a maybe or something, then I could have done it, but it was a firm commitment. So, anyway, I cried again, because this is what I really wanted to do. This one didn't get me anywhere--[laughs]--but I cried. And so I stayed the year at St. Mary's, and earlier in the year they called me again, because at St. Anthony they were losing a Math teacher and a counselor--they needed a counselor. So, I--Sister Kathleen Mary [McCarthy] was the Provincial, and so I went and talked to her. Sister Mary [Vaughn] Williams was my Regional--I don't think we called them that then--but she was my Regional. So I talked with her. I had already talked with [Sister] Regina Clare [Salazar] the year before. So, anyway, Sister--I got the permission to go ahead and do it and I had to write back to the people in Generalate back in--hate that word--Congregational Leadership people--had to write to them to get permission from them to go, because there had to be a definite need, et cetera. So--everything seemed to work right. And I went. I left here and I went to San Francisco again and spent a couple weeks with my mom. And at that time she could still live alone, and she was--she was healthy and good. But again, she was the one--she taught me the crying thing I guess. She was really sad because I was going so far away. And I said, "Just think about this, Mom--you could spend Christmas in Hawaii--you could spend Easter in Hawaii--you could come anytime!" Well, that wasn't working real well, but finally--it was a help. When I went--now this is the next group of my nieces and nephews. These are the ones who are now in their late 30's early 40's, right? And--but at that time they were--it was five--so [Sarah] was four years old--they were four, five, six and seven. And so I--they said, "We're going to miss you, Auntie". And so I said, "I'm going to miss you, too--but let me tell you something--that every night when I look up at the stars you can look up at the sky and see the same stars. So I'll send my love and my prayers to you every time I look up there, and you can get them from the stars and then send them back to me". So they said, "Okay, okay." Well, I go to get up on the plane, and these four little kids are standing in a huddle, sobbing--[laughs]. And anyway, yes, they were sobbing--[laughs]--so just like their grandfather, who was pulling my leg and didn't want me to go--they were doing the same thing. "But Grandma's going to cry! Mommy's going to cry!" Oh my God! Anyway, I finally got on the plane, and that's when I cried--and it still didn't do anything.

[00:55:14.08] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: But anyway, I arrived on Maui and there I was. I had an office that I didn't know what to do with, and I had to start going through things and figure out--it's not my office, it's the person who was here before me. Does this happen every time you change something? You go into somebody else's office? Well, it took a while, and I finally got it to be mine. And then--the classroom the same thing--I had to go into the classroom where I was teaching fourth year Math--it was a bunch of different kinds of things. We still weren't into the real preparation for stuff. By the time I left, we--I had put in the AB Calculus--we didn't get to the BC, but anyway--and had a number of students--like nine students--in the class, and in a small school that's pretty good. So those were the two big things that I did when I first got there. I had never taught boys before, so that was the other big thing that I did when I got there. Nothing to it. From the fact that I have brothers and nephews--cousins are mostly boys--from that point of view it was nothing. Of course, then the faculty told me that I favored the boys, and I said, "No I don't!" But I don't--I still don't think I did, but anyway, I love them. And that's why I love working with Anna's son, because he's such a good kid, and he's a boy--I mean, he's a real boy. And so that first year was a little bit hard getting into things. But--and we did the ACT [American College Testing] testing and we did the SAT [Scholastic Aptitude Test] testing, and the different schools--we were the only Catholic school on the island. There were three public schools at that time on the island, and we worked together a lot. Two days ago I got a phone call from one of the counselors at Maui High School. And he says, "You remember me?" And I said, "Earl, how could I forget you?"

He said, "Well, can you come this weekend to proctor the SAT test?" [laughs]. And I said, "Sure!" Anyway, we didn't do that of course. He's been thinking of me, and so he figured out a way to get in touch. So now we're both together.

[00:58:19.00] [Director's comments].

[00:58:29.00] End of interview Part I. Interview resumes Part II.

[00:58:29.00] [Director's comments].

[00:58:43.18] SHANNON GREEN: So we were talking about Hawaii--

[00:58:46.24] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: Hawaii--"Maui no ka oi" ["Maui is the best"].

[00:58:50.26] SHANNON GREEN: And you--so in the first year it took a little--

[00:58:53.10] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: --time getting into things. And we started a counselor's group--Maui Counselor's Group. And we met once a month and that was good. We did a whole bunch of things. The training of students for--oh God, I can't think of the word--where do you sit down and instead of going to court you sit down and talk about things?

[00:59:33.13] SHANNON GREEN: Mediation?

[00:59:34.07] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: For mediation--thank you--I taught the mediation. So that year I trained mediation with people, and then taught groups from then on. And so on--from all the schools--we started doing it with--here's a group from St. Anthony, one from Maui High, one from Baldwin High School--and we--do them individually. And then we started where we did them all together. So the Mediation Services of Maui called students in to help with some of the mediation problems they had. And we each had at least one person who was really a good--really primary kind of person to send. And they would--they just did fantastic jobs. They also did the mediation within the school. Sometimes we would have to call one of the mediators from one of the other schools, because the problem was between students from different schools. It was a marvelous thing. And then we started in the elementary schools. We could do it--I had four elementary schools--four Catholic elementary schools that we could do it in. The public schools didn't have it quite so easy--they had to go through too much red tape. So they did a couple, but not as many as they could have. But the island knew what mediation was--every kid knew what mediation is. And we started--when they started doing the Hawaii State--the alcohol and the drug program, we went--we would take kids from our schools for a weekend, and they would do the training with them--so how to work with different groups. And so it was the Coalition for a Drug-free Maui--Coalition for a Drug-free Hawaii--America, whatever. They're still going--I watch their ads on TV. But the students actually did their own--presented their own films and plays and different ways of getting kids to realize what was happening to them. So there was another thing. We did so many things that it didn't seem possible, because I could not have done that here in Los Angeles--it would not have turned out the same way, because there was not that same working relationship between the Catholic schools and the public schools and everybody else. So then I started working with the abuse--children who were abused. So it's the Maui Association for--MACACC--for--it was for the abuse of children. Anyway, it was the Maui group that was working with abused children. And it was a block right in back of us--right in back of the school--the office. So I would go over there regularly too. And then I got on their Board. So I was on the Board there and worked with them. It's interesting to see what happens to you in a place that's as small as that. When I first went, I think the population was 80,000 on Maui--now it's probably 80,000--I

mean--it was--what did I say? I mean--eighty--I mean eight million. I don't think it's that much, but they're--800,000. It's they're building until the seams burst and so I don't know how they're going to continue. When my friends were here for Assembly, they said that there are some parts of Maui that still are not developed yet. And so that is--that's really good for me to hear. My kids--they would send us tickets to fly back and forth. So taking ten students and myself back and forth, the DOE or Department of Education included us--okay, they paid for all our stuff, and the hotels at least once a month for one of those programs. And it was amazing, you know, to me, because again, think of going from here to San Diego and taking ten students from a public school and ten from Catholic school--paying for all of them to be in a hotel, and then also paying for their airfare? [shakes head] And their--I don't know what happened to meals. [laughs]. I guess we paid for our own meals--I don't remember that. But we did--we did so much stuff with the counseling. With the Math not so much, because I'd like go little by little. And then in the year--not 2000--1999 I applied for the grant from St. Paul to do counseling in all of the four elementary--Catholic elementary schools. They had all gone through their accreditation, and part of the accreditation was, for each of them that they had to beef up their counseling program somehow, because they really weren't doing anything. So Leone, in her--you know, I get good ideas and then I get caught up in them--like today. Let's see--I sent in--I applied for the grant, which paid enough--it just gave me an amount of money. Okay--paid for my salary for that one--first semester, and then paid for me to get stuff to--get things that I could use for counseling, because I needed materials. I needed books, I needed puppets for the little kids--I needed--because I was going from pre-school to twelfth grade--I was going where my heart was leading me--to my babies. And then the big guys--my big Samoan boys--who are really such babies. They look so tough and they're not. I'm sorry. I'm back again. They--so I got a lot of stuff. And I had a box for each school--a plastic box for each school--and I put the things I needed for that school in that box, in the back of the car. And it worked for a while until somebody else had to put stuff in the back of the car. [laughs]. I had to take all my stuff out. And I had the use of that car also for that semester, because I was the only one moving around. So I went to St. Joseph's [School] in Makawao, which is up-country Maui; I went to Christ the King [School] in Kahului; I went to Maria Lanakila [School] out in Lahaina and St. Anthony's [School] in Wailuku. And before very long it became very clear to me that even these four different groups on the same island were so different from one another culturally. The kids up-country--St. Joseph kids--had to go home from school almost every day to take care of their animals, because they lived on ranches or farms. They didn't play very often in elementary school in sports because of that. And so they were real country kids. Then I come down to Christ the King, and Christ the King is the first city you come into town--you come into when you come from the airport. But it's got a lot of industrial things there too, so--no big rich people living in Kahului. Most of the kids were--their parents had to work, either at the hospital as nurses or as policemen or as firemen or at the hotels. And so they were--if you want--your "latch-key kids". And they could stay after school. So the afterschool program was really important there. And so they'd get into some sports--nothing really big, because the thing that was big was football, and that took place on weekends, and was mostly coached by the fathers who were--[makes clenched fist and sound]--like this. So it was football, soccer and--not so much baseball--and basketball that were the big sports for the boys. Anyway, you come up to--so we've come--Makawao--Kahului--how we're in Wailuku. Wailuku is the oldest town. It's where the government structures were--the hospital is, where the city hall is, where all the folks who make a little bit of money or have some influence in the community--many of them live there. Their children go to St. Anthony. And a lot of their children are already into sports, but they're--the girls are doing ballet, or dance, or, you know, something. The boys are doing gymnastics or something. And the school does have an after school program, but it helps them to do their homework--which is the one that really works--or it's the only school where it really works. And then we go out to Lahaina, to Maria Lanakila, where we have kids who roam up and down Front Street after school, whose parents are also working very hard--where we have more homeless people. Many of the children are

homeless.

[01:11:44.16] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: We have one boy who--this is a real win-win situation. He and his mother came from California when he was in the third grade. They lived on the beach. She got help for him for his tuition, and he was in the school--Maria--in Sacred Heart school. And but anyway, by the time you finish there and St. Anthony--he got a full scholarship to college. And so this little boy who was abused by his dad here ends up with this full thing. It was a real happy thing. Anyway, I was working with the seventh graders. And I asked them to write a little thing on where they saw themselves--we were talking about, you know, what they were going to do with their lives--where they could see themselves five years from now. They'd be finishing high school. So we got--getting ready for college, all those things, which many of them did. These two boys said, "We're going to be pimps on Front Street". And that's probably what they probably were going to do at that point. I never thought anyone would really say that or write it down. Anyway, I got to the two mothers and they worked with the boys for a while. But by the time they--middle of their eighth grade, they were so obnoxious that they asked them to leave the school. So, it was a really sad thing. But that's probably where they are. Oh my. Anyway, the little people--the preschoolers--the three and four year olds were the joy of my life at every school. Kindergarten--the five year olds--they would all--when they saw me they'd all come running and hug me down here [points to waist], because they didn't reach anywhere else. And so I was getting all of these hugs. By the time I'd been there for a few years, they were hugging me around the waist, and by the time I'd been there a little bit longer they were in high school and hugging me. But the same kids, because I was there so long. Actually, I was teaching a couple of children of children I had taught. So that was a big thing for me. So I'd go and I'd say, "All right--third grade, come on, line up. How many--did I teach any of your mothers?" [Raises hand.] "You taught my mom--you taught my dad--you taught my auntie"--the whole thing--and they thought it was the best thing. When they got a little bit older they didn't think it was quite so much, but third grade still--but, oh gosh, this one group of boys who I had known since they were babies. They were in the sixth grade when I left, and they came at me, all of them, as if they were playing football. And here comes that line. [laughs]. And they all came and hugged me at the same time. And so I had to hold onto some of them so I wouldn't fall. But they were--those guys I loved so much, because they were naughty. Oh gosh, they were naughty. But they made it. They were the ones who had to do all the work on bullying, and, yeah. They'd say, "What do you do with little children in counseling?" And I said, "Easy". I also did the training for--well I--we went to Oahu and did training for working with abuse--the priest abuse thing. And not just that, but that's what triggered it. And so, I trained the teachers, but some of the teachers were really--really did not want to do it. And so I did it with the kids. So, you know, it's easy when they know you and they trust you. And so--those were some of the hard things though. And it was interesting because I had meetings for parents--five sets of parents came to one of the meetings. And after--and I showed what I was going to do with the little ones, and they were fine with it. So I figured if they came--were interested enough and came--then it was all right. Some people might not approve of what was being taught, but this one family especially was very good, and they approved. So--oh my--five--can you imagine a whole school and only five sets of parents. Oh well. Was that one of the last things I did?

[01:17:36.13] SHANNON GREEN: Would you talk a little bit about outside of your ministry in Hawaii--the community? Some of your friends? Or what you loved about living there, or?

[01:17:44.06] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: [laughs]. Okay. I loved--the thing I loved most was the people. What I do outside my ministry--oh there's so many things we did. We had access to beaches so we could go. We went sometimes on picnics to the beach. Sister Sara [??] led the choir, and so I would go down to the choir with her--the choir things. I know I did so many things outside of school--I was busy all the time. [all laugh]. What did I do? Well, I told you--some

things--lot of things that I already told you--it was with the counselors. It was also in Delta Kappa Gamma [Society], which is a sorority of teachers--a national sorority. And spent two horrible years as president of the Delta Kappa Gamma. They were--we were trying to move it around, but the only ones who were moving it around were the high school people, not the elementary people. So it was--that one was hard for me. I couldn't--I had a hard time working with that. But I did it. The kids--it was always what they were in--we were at football games, and basketball games, soccer games, tennis matches, swimming matches--I never got to the baseball stadium. And one of the boys who I worked with from the time he was small [Shane Victorino (1980-), Major League baseball outfielder and track star ("The Flying Hawaiian")] turned out to be on a World Series team--couple of--he was drafted right out of high school by the Dodgers, but then he went--they moved him all around. I think it was with Chicago that they won--was it Chicago or was it Boston? He was in Boston a long time. I think it was Chicago though that they won the World Series that year. So, even though--he was baseball--and his parents are such good friends of mine. And he not only made it, if you will, in baseball, he won--I think he still probably has some of the top awards in track. They called him the "Flying Hawaiian" when he was playing here. And basketball, football--I mean, he did everything. And he was hyperactive kid, that his mother had to keep busy all the time. And it turned out to be a good thing that she did keep him busy all the time.

[01:21:12.18] SHANNON GREEN: How about Hawaiian culture. Were there things of that--did you feel a part of that?

[01:21:19.07] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: Yes. Okay, Sister Roselani's family sort of "hānai'd" us--to "hānai" is to "adopt"--those of us who were not from Hawaii. And so it was so easy to just be--I never felt like I had to be assimilated, because I was automatically. I took classes, actually. I did a lot of things in the "ho'ohana [hana??]", which is the Hawaiian way of solving a problem within a family--within a group. So I did several classes in the "ho'ohana [hana??]", and then I worked with a couple of Hawaiian families in resolving some--some were resolved in different ways--but we did resolve--with a resolution, rather than trying a more Western way of doing things. I did take--I took classes over on Oahu, at UH [University of Hawaii]. Sometimes--again, the Enomoto's--Sister Roselani's family--know a lot of entertainers, because they've been in their family too. Her sister writes music--Hawaiian. And so we'd go places and we'd see people that she knew--some of the more famous--the entertainers--and they would just take us in--say, "Come, come". And so that was another way of learning the culture and becoming part of things. One time at school--I think it was the second year I was there--these boys were teasing another boy who had just come from the mainland. And I hadn't been there very long. And I said to the Hawaiian boys, I said, "What are you doing?" And they said, "Well, you know, he doesn't know what we're talking about so we--". I said, "Well, you know, why would you do that to somebody when we're supposed to be learning kindness and gentleness and love toward people?" Not, you know, let's kick them out of the school type of thing, but let's work with them and see what we can do. And I said, "Would you ever do anything like that to me?" And he said, "No! No Sister!" And I said, "Why not?" "Because you're one of the brahs!"--the brothers. I said, "Thank you, I guess". That you belong--that's what they meant. And I thought, oh dear. And it's true--sometimes he will come with a--what do you call it--on their shoulder--and they--a chip on their shoulder--and they think they know better and they're going to teach these Hawaiian something. And so I went in with a full force and with the counseling and said, "Don't you ever let anybody tell you're not better. Don't let your parents tell you you're not better. You guys can go to college just as well as anyone else." And this one boy said, when he came back from college that first Christmas, he said, "Sister! Guess what? I can speak Standard English!" And I said, "I know you can speak Standard English!" [laughs]. It wasn't a surprise to me. And he did so well--he got his doctorate in Pharmacy and he didn't think he could--he was one of the smartest kids I ever taught. But he didn't think he could do it. Oh my goodness! Another boy was afraid of leaving Maui--he was afraid of going on a plane. And later I

found out his dad was also afraid of going on a plane, so--I sent him to UH--University of Hawaii--on--in Hilo. And so he did very well there--he did very well. So he's working actually with the university, with his cousin, at the university on Maui. So they have--they've started the University of Hawaii on Maui, see? And all our kids--some of them had to get away. That was my big thing--they had to get away, otherwise they were just going to turn themselves into the stereotype. I never said that to them, but I said, "You don't have to go forever--you can go to the mainland for one year and come back". You can go to Oahu for one year and come back. You know, because they are just so insulated--at least at that time they were.

[01:26:33.03] SHANNON GREEN: Was it hard to leave Hawaii?

[01:26:35.06] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: Yes. It was. And I left three times. [laughs]. The first time I left I came here, and it was going to be just for a semester. I was going to go to the doctors and get, you know, things. I had been falling. So it was to get some input on what was happening. And you know, that was hard. And--but during the time I was here, I realized that it was better for me to be here, because I was getting the physical care--the medical care that I needed. I was also closer to my mother who was closer to--let's see, I came back two years before she died. Wait a minute--she came back--no I didn't--I came back in 2008--she died in 2006. And I came at Thanksgiving time that year--I left school. I had someone cover for me. I had--one of the schools--I had--that wasn't the year I fell. Anyway, let me clear this in my mind, when I did stuff. Anyway I came back at Halloween time, because my youngest--this is the youngest group of nieces and nephews now--were in there--you know, it was their costumes. They're only three of them. They are 13, 14 and 15 now. So they're that youngest group of nieces and nephews. But anyway, they were in these cute little costumes. And my mother didn't die until the 12th of December, which was the anniversary of my nephew's death--the one I told you made me laugh all the time--Gregory. And so I said, "Greg, if you're going to do it, do it now. Don't make her suffer--pull her up now". And I said, "Mom, hold onto Gregory's hand because he's trying to get you up there right now". [laughs]. Anyway, so she died--she was 93--she was two weeks off of being 94, and she's the oldest person in our family that I ever knew. And yeah--so anyway she left--died--and I couldn't go back--yet--I didn't go back until the end of January, because I was--I guess it was a kind of grieving but I just couldn't do it--I couldn't. And when I got back, that's when all these things started happening. What--I've got five minutes? [laughs].

[01:29:55.06] SHANNON GREEN: Yeah.

[01:29:57.05] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: When I got back I didn't--I had decided--no--when I first came here in 2008, it was for that short time. And then I decided that I would stay, because things--I was closer to the family, and I didn't really want to go away again. But I did go back to get the things I'd left behind. And but--someone else went with me, and we did tours of both Oahu and Maui. And then I went back again to get more things that I'd left behind--[laughs]. And it was--it was harder each time. And I've asked to go back again, but they're afraid that the length of the air--the ride--the plane ride--would be too much. So here I am. But I made the choice. Okay, what were you going to say?

[01:31:04.23] SHANNON GREEN: Well, and they've come to you.

[01:31:06.09] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: Oh they come--sometimes.

[01:31:07.13] SHANNON GREEN: A few.

[01:31:08.00] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: Sometimes they--yes, the Sisters do--yes.

[01:31:12.15] SHANNON GREEN: As we wrap up, I do want to ask you--all of your experience in education and counseling--and we have students at the Mount who are preparing for both of those kinds of careers--did you have any advice for them or words of wisdom--encouragement?

[01:31:31.01] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: For education--just hang in there. Enjoy all your preparation. Pretend that when you're preparing things in a class, pretend that you are the child in the class, learning these things, because what you're learning is how to present it--how to do it. But as you do that, pretend you're the child. For counseling--just love every single child or person who comes in front of you--just love them to pieces, and let them know that you love them, and they will love you and they will come to you for help. You know, don't try to force things on them--just love them. And when they start hugging you around the ankles and the knees and then finally around the waist then you know you've made it--except for the boys who got me around the shoulders to keep me from falling. [laughs]. Oh jeez.

[01:32:32.07] SHANNON GREEN: And I usually ask people what their greatest joy is, but you've already said it.

[01:32:36.08] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: Yeah.

[01:32:36.20] SHANNON GREEN: The little ones.

[01:32:39.11] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: We have one baby in our family--so he's my joy--oh, there's another thing I say to, because--when people ask me if I miss Hawaii. And I say, "No, not Hawaii itself, but the people". And I say, "I left my heart in San Francisco, but I left my soul on Maui". And I really believe that, because, you know--I mean, I have it, but when I want to go back, that's what it is--it's my soul, not my heart, but the soul.

[01:33:14.28] SHANNON GREEN: Was there anything else that you reflected on as you thought about our time that you wanted to share that I haven't asked you about?

[01:33:23.15] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: I can't think of anything--my mind is tired.

[01:33:27.05] SHANNON GREEN: You've been working hard.

[01:33:28.16] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: My mind is tired.

[01:33:31.05] [Director's comments].

[01:33:48.26] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: I want you to know that theatre and film has always been in my life. My grandfather worked for Eastman Kodak back in the--Rochester [New York]--and he came out here when they first moved to California. He--my mom worked as a teenager--she did the splicing of films, and she went to every movie she could get to, which meant that when we were born she was taking us to every movie she could get to--which mean that we were in a couple of movies when we were little. And--although never--you can't really see us. I can't think of it now--something about San Francisco. And the one was [actors] Glenn Ford [1916-2006] and Evelyn Keyes [1916-2008], and they called my uncle--worked or was going to school, I don't know--anyway he was downtown and they were filming and they needed two little kids. And so he said, "I've got two little kids". So--

[01:34:49.01] SHANNON GREEN: You've come full circle.

[01:34:52.16] SISTER LEONE DREXLER: Full circle. And in school I was always in everything, so. But sometimes when a camera is pointed at me--for some reason--I just--[makes face]--clam up. [laughs]. "What did you ask me? What's that big thing out there?"

[01:35:15.21] [Director's comments].

[01:35:54.07] End of interview.

Interview Index

Interview Date: 11/15/2017

Interviewee: Sister Leone Drexler

Interviewer: Shannon Green, Director, CSJ Institute, Mount Saint Mary's University; Sean Gary, Kelby Thwaits, Instructor, Film and Television, Mount Saint Mary's University.

Location: Carondelet Center, Los Angeles, California.

Transcription Date: 01/17/2018

Transcribed By: Nancy Steinmann

[00:00:00.00] [Director's comments]

[00:02:03.04] Date, location participants.

[00:02:16.24] Full name and age: Sister Leone Drexler, age 79. Baptismal name: Leone Drexler. Former religious name: Sister Ilene Leo [Drexler].

[00:03:29.18] Early life and family. Born San Francisco, California. Oldest of four children (2 girls 2 boys). Father machinist, mother homemaker. St. Emydius Parish, Ingleside area of San Francisco. Family activities.

[00:06:08.14] Early religious life. Catholic education. Sister Francis [??], first grade teacher. Father helping Sisters.

[00:07:26.16] [Director's comments].

[00:07:48.24] Parents reaction to vocation. Meeting CSJs. Holy Name Sisters.

[00:09:14.23] Early vocation. Second grade teacher Sister Anne Bernadette [Kehoe??]. Attending Star of the Sea High School. Enrolling in Mount St. Mary's College.

[00:11:37.08] Impressions of CSJs. Reasons for choosing CSJs. Sister faculty: Sister Regina McLaughlin, kindergarten; Sister Anne Bernadette [Kehoe??], 2nd grade; Sister Florentine [??], 4th grade; Sister Adele Marie [Morgan?? (-2014)], 7th grade; Sister Mary Daniel Musgrave [(-1968)], 8th grade.

[00:15:04.06] Sisters who encouraged vocation in high school. Sister Helen Clare [Fenton (1917–2010)]; Sister Patricia Clare [Mullin (1908–2002)]; Sister St. James [??].

[00:16:06.14] Postulant and novitiate life in Los Angeles. Convent at what is now Carondelet Center. Postulant habit. Building of MSMU chapel. Attending MSMC. Sister St. James [??]. Sister Mary [Vaughn] Williams, French faculty. Sister Eloise Therese [Mescall (1919–2001)], French faculty. Speaking French in France. Madame [Nataf?], French teacher at St. Mary's.

[00:22:57.19] Attending MSMC. Mathematics major. Group majors. Sister Frances [??]. Graduating in juniorate 1959.

[00:25:18.16] Early ministries. Teaching 2nd grade. Nightmare of students climbing out of window. Receiving grant to attend Notre Dame (South Bend, Indiana) for masters of Mathematics. Degree in Counseling and Guidance/School Psychology, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles.

[00:27:31.12] Chronological ministries. St. Anselm's teaching 2nd grade 4 years . Teaching at Bishop Conaty High School 1 year. Living at Infant of Prague convent (Stimson House). Assassination of President John F. Kennedy (1917–1963). Teaching at Cathedral High School, San Diego 3 years. Teaching at Star of the Sea, San Francisco 9 years (1967–1976). Attending University of San Francisco for secondary teaching credential. Becoming Principal of Star of the Sea.

[00:32:46.17] Ministries continued. Interest in counseling. Grant from City of San Francisco for counseling training for students. Teaching at St. Mary's Academy (1976–1985) and at St. John Elementary School next door. Attending Loyola Marymount for degrees in Counseling and Guidance and School Psychology.

[00:34:42.26] Summer of Love (1967) in San Francisco. High school students participating in Hippie movement and drug scene. Story about nephew seeing "hippies" (rabbits). Gay Revolution. Counseling students experimenting with alternate sexualities.

[00:41:27.05] Vatican II. Change in habit. Sisters leaving community. First day at school without habit.

[00:45:49.07] Vatican II. Changes in liturgy. Learning Latin. Receiving communion in the hand. Lay ministers. Parents reaction to Vatican II.

[00:47:58.21] Moving to Hawaii. Sister Anne Eugene [??]. Cruise to Hawaii. Sister Roselani Enomoto. Sister Frances Margaret Darling. Sister Dennis Mary [McFadden]. Sister Kathleen Mary [McCarthy], Provincial. Sister Mary Vaughn Williams, Regional. Sister Regina Clare Salazar. Family's reaction to move. Story about looking up at stars.

[00:55:16.17] Teaching in Hawaii. Teaching boys.

[00:58:19.04] [Director's comments].

[00:58:29.04] [Interview resumes]. Teaching in Hawaii. Maui counselor's group. Teaching mediation for school professionals and students. Coalition for Drug-Free Hawaii. Working as Board Member of Maui Association for Child Abuse (MACACC).

[01:05:25.29] Grant for counseling in elementary schools (1999). Counseling schools: St. Joseph's School, Makawao, Hawaii; Christ the King School, Kahului, Hawaii; Maria Lanakila, Lahaina, Hawaii; St. Anthony's School, Wailuku, Hawaii. Cultural difference between schools/areas.

[01:11:42.10] Story about homeless boy at St. Anthony's getting college scholarship. Story about two boys planning to be pimps. Working with young children. Teaching multiple generations. Story about group hug from boys. Counseling children for bullying, abuse (including by priests).

[01:17:39.20] Community life outside ministry. Choir. Serving as President of Delta Kappa Gamma Society (National educator's sorority). Sports meets for children. Student Shane Victorino (1980–), Major League baseball outfielder and track star ("The Flying Hawaiian").

[01:21:12.17] Hawaiian culture. Sister Roselani Enomoto. Tradition of "hānai": adoption of one person (any age) by another. Classes in tradition of "ho'ohana [hana??]": problem-solving within groups. Story about boys teasing mainlander: "you're one of the brahs [brothers]". Story of student getting doctorate in pharmacy. Story of student afraid of flying. University of Hawaii on Maui. Students in insulated environments.

[01:26:32.10] Leaving Hawaii (three times). Medical issues 2008. Death of mother.

[01:31:12.21] Advice for current education students. "Pretend you are a child." "Show children you love them".

[01:33:14.01] Other reflections.

[01:33:32.15] [Director's comments.]

[01:33:48.29] Theatre and film. Grandfather working for Eastman Kodak. Mother working in editing. Appearing in a Glenn Ford movie.

[01:35:15.29] [Director's comments].

[01:35:54.07] End of interview.